

**Home Access Program
Vermont Center for Independent Living
House Appropriations Testimony
Feb 18, 2016**

- Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today.
- My name is Patricia Tedesco and I live in Woodbury. I have been with the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) since 2011 and have assisted the Home Access Program for about two years.
- The Home Access Program provides accessibility modifications for Vermonters living with a permanent disability to enable them to live more independently and remain in their homes and communities. This means building a ramp or making a bathroom accessible, so people can stay in their homes instead of having to live in a nursing home. Some of those disabilities include osteoarthritis, Parkinson's disease, COPD and spinal stenosis – to name only a few.
- On behalf of the peers we serve and the staff at VCIL, I want to thank each of you for your support of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB), through which we receive most of our funding.
- Because our peers receive assistance based on funding through VHCB, we request that you fund VHCB at the highest possible level. We appreciate that the Governor has recommended level funding for VHCB at \$14M. Given another difficult budget year, we respectfully ask that you provide VHCB as much of its full, statutory share of the Property Transfer Tax as possible, which is estimated at \$19.3M for next year.
- The average cost of a home modification through this program is \$10,000 compared to the \$97,000 per year cost to live in a nursing home. VCIL has specific ADA compliant guidelines for bathrooms and ramps, keeping the peer safer and providing the home accessibility for the next owner.
- The Home Access Program currently has a waiting list of 65 people with a wait of about 2 years.
- Last year, with an additional \$206,000 from Choices for Care savings, we were able to decrease our waiting list, but it is now growing again.
- Since October 1, 2015, we have completed 30 home modifications statewide and we have another 30 in progress, helping Vermonters to remain in their homes and participate in their communities.
- Also, local economies benefit from this funding because contractors throughout the state are receiving livable wages. The contractors receive training and information from us about working with folks who have disabilities. They understand the importance of helping fellow Vermonters gain more independence by having better accessibility.
- With the traditional HAP funding levels of \$425,000 to \$475,000 from VHCB and \$100,000 from the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living we are able to provide about 50 home modifications a year although our waiting list will continue to grow, with 10 or 12 new applications each month.

- Since the Home Access Program funding depends in large part on VHCB's appropriation, we ask you to provide them with the highest possible funding level above the Governor's recommended 14 million dollars.
- Thank you for your time, I know you have difficult decisions to make.